

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

**INFORMANT: WILLIAM E. LAMB
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT GABRIELSKY
DATE: FEBRUARY 16, 1989**

**R = ROBERT
W = WILLIAM**

SG-NA-T026

Tape begins with interviewer in mid-sentence:

R: . . .Gears Project, The Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts 1920-1980. Uh, the date is February 16th, 1989, and I'm interviewing William Lamb. Okay, uh, did you want to go on? You were mentioning that you had seen my letter to the editor [unclear].

W: I read you letter and noticed that you were looking for photographs of the old Arnold Print Works. And uh, I started to tell you that I started work February of 1929. And of course we know what happened at November of 1929. [Tape is very noisy] [R: Umhm] So these were tough days. And it was before the days of, of uh, widely used Kodaks. [R: Yeah] So there weren't a lot of pictures taken. So I tried to think (--)

R: That, and there were a lot there that were lost. There were a lot of glass plate negatives that were thrown into the dump very recently.

W: Yes, could have been.

R: Like a couple of months ago.

W: Now I went through, I happen to think that I did have a bunch of uh, flood pictures [R: Uh huh] uh, going back to 1927. And I brought some of those along in case you want to look at it.

R: That would be wonderful. [Tape is very noisy]

W: Now they're, they're of flood damage to the Sprague property and to the surrounding, the river, the North Branch along River Street. Where the water went right over the bridges, ruined the bridges and pulled down a wall of Arnold Print Works. [R: Umhm, yeah] And uh, I can't remember having at home any other. I mean I, I, I've got a little snap shot of a gal working in the office, a gal I later married, but that doesn't [tape very noisy-few words unclear] that type of thing. But uh (--)

R: I think that's very important. A picture like that would be

extremely important.

W: Yeah. Well I think you'll be interested in these uh, in these picture I have here. [R: Okay] Um, (--)

R: Towards the end of the interview [W: Yes] we'll take a look at those okay?

W: Well do you want me to tell you the story of my life down at the Print Works, or what, how do you(--)

R: Well pretty much, but let me direct it a little bit. You seem to be quite willing to talk. So I'll just you know, I'll ask you a few questions and you will see where we go from there, okay?

W: Fine.

R: Uh, first, where were you born?

W: North Adams.

R: You were born in North Adams. [W: Right] Where in North Adams?

W: North Adams Hospital, [R: uh huh] 1910.

R: Uh huh. Where were your grandparents from?

W: My father came from the Boston area, Somerville. He was a shoe maker. My mother's family was in Catskill, New York, also a shoe man. My father was a traveling salesman and called on my grandfather. Ended up wooing his daughter. And they were married. And he came to North Adams early in the 1900 and opened a shoe store. [R: Umhm] I was born, my brother (--) He must have come 1908, or 09, along there. My brother, two years older was born in

Somerville and uh, I was born here in 1910.

R: Uh, do you uh, do you remember your grandparents? Were your grandparents alive? [W: Oh yes] Yes.

W: Well my, on my mother's side. [R: Uh huh] My, my grandfather, my dad's father died when he was very young. [R: Uh huh] But I do remember my grandmother and relatives in Boston. I used to visit when I was a kid. And of course I remember well all the family over in Catskill, New York. [R: Uh huh] To this day we still go back and visit [R: umhm] cousins and (--)

R: Uh, besides your grandparents, uh, did you have any association when you were very young with, with older people? I mean people older than your parent's generation?

W: No, I wouldn't say so.

R: Uh huh. Did you (--)

W: I knew a lot of their friends of their generation, but I wouldn't have much occasion to know.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Did you, do you, did you, (--) Did your grandparents ever tell you any stories about when they were young? Or did they pass any stories down to you that you can remember?

W: I don't remember stories passed, I remember a lot of interesting things that, that I've noticed uh, when I was a youngster you know, back in around 1920 [R: uh huh] when I visited either Somerville, or New York State. You know, such as the River was always [unclear]. Hudson River. [R: Umhm] They were right on the Hudson River. There was what they called a crick came up and split the town in half. And near where my grandparents lived was a, was a turntable bridge. [R: Uh huh] If you wanted to get through was a, there was a big key that they [unclear].

R: But was it a railroad, a railroad bridge, or?

W: No no, no. It was a, a, automobile, [R: Uh huh] traffic bridge. But anything with a tall mast couldn't [R: right] go under it. So of course that was a big thrill to me to go (--)

R: Is that near Tapanze, or above, or?

W: Oh this is way, this is uh, well do you know where Hudson is? [R: yeah (unclear)] It, it's up near the Hudson area. [R: Uh huh] Well it's the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. [R: Right] It goes in to Catskill. [R: Umhm, umhm] And I remember to that in my going over there we had to take a ferry. Uh, Hudson Athen's Ferry. Rip Van Winkle Bridge of course hadn't been built then. So I can remember clearly going back and forth on the ferry.

R: How old were you then?

W: Eight, ten.

R: Uh huh. Were they, are they about your earliest memories, or do you have memories earlier than that?

W: I, I guess, I guess that's about the earliest. [R: Uh huh] I do remember (--) Of course when you're, when you're as old, I'm seventy-nine. [R: Uh huh] And when you think back it's a long time back. [R: Yeah, yeah] So that when you ask me do I, I may, a lot of my recollections may have been stories I'd been told. [R: Right, right] Now I can point out clearly where I lived in 1910. [R: umhm] Uh, uh, I didn't, I was too young to go to school in that location, but I, I knew close friends of my parents who, you know, I was the fare-haired youngster of the family [R: umhm] and I can remember them being nice to me and all that sort of thing.

R: Um, what um, where did you go to school?

W: I just went to local schools. Drury High School. Graduated in '28 and went to work at the Print Works in 1929.

R: What did you do between 1928 and 29? Between the point when you graduated from high school and (--)

W: Just a few months. [R: Uh huh, I see] I worked in my father's shoe store. [R: I see] I decided the shoe, retail shoe business was not for me.

R: Uh huh. What, what, what was the first job you ever had? Was that it, working in the shoe store, or?

W: Yes. [R: Um] Although I worked, since I was a youngster I used to putter papers when I was a kid in grammar school. [R: Oh, so you did have a, so you did, you sold papers] And when I was in high school I worked for my father in the store after school.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, did uh, did you or do you go to church?

W: Yes.

R: Uh, what church?

W: Episcopal.

R: Uh huh. Uh, are you beyond going to services? Are you active in any way in the church?

W: I used to be [R: uh huh] but I, my son's taking over my [unclear]. No I was very active in the church in my younger days.

R: What sort, what was the nature of your activities? This is Saint John's, right? Saint John's?

W: Well the Episcopal, yeah. [R: Yeah] The Episcopal Church is sort of governed by what they call a Vestry, which is like a board of directors. There are about a dozen men. And I served on the Vestry for many years. Uh, I uh, had charge of their financial campaign for many many years. I uh, when I was a youngster, you know, ten, twelve years old I use to be an acolyte. [R: Uh huh] And uh, then as a grownup we used to have uh, during lent Wednesday morning early communions. That's when our high school was in the center of town. And my wife and I and another couple used to go, go down early and the high school kids and teachers would all come. And we'd serve breakfast afterwards. [R: Uh huh] We'd just have time to scoot up to school, because it was just a ten minute run. So we did that for seventeen years, twenty years.

R: This was, this was, there was a, there was a communion during the week is it? I don't know.

W: Yes. [R: I see] Wednes, Wednesday mornings.

R: Wednesday morning. Was this a regular communion every Wednesday, or during Lent?

W: Uh, during (--) Well the breakfast was a Lenten operation. [R: Uh huh] But to this day Episcopal Church has a Wednesday communion. [R: uh huh, uh huh] Noon time maybe.

R: Umhm. When were you married?

W: 1937.

R: Where is your wife from?

W: She's home with me. [Laughs]

R: Where is she from?

W: Oh excuse me! [R: Yeah] Clarksburg.

R: Clarksburg, uh huh.

W: Yeah. In fact we're living in a home that was built for her to be born in.

R: Uh huh. Um, so, so you started working in Marshall Street, the, The Arnold Print Works [W: yes] at Marshall Street in 1929? [W: Right] In, what was the month again?

W: February.

R: February, [W: yes] uh huh. And um, what was your job there? What was your first job there?

W: Well the uh, are you familiar with the type of business that the Arnold Print Work was?

R: They were printing textiles. Uh, you know, some (--)

W: On, in the early days, in those early days there were converters. In other words these um, New York firms would buy the cloth, ship it to us, we would receive it and store it, and process it at their direction. So it was not our material. [R: Uh huh] We were just providing a service [R: uh huh] of bleaching, printing [R: right] folding, storing. And it would be shipped out to customers at their instruction. So that my first job there was in an area that we called a manager's office, separated from the main office, which was the financial end of the business. Now the manager's office more or less took care of the technical end of the, of the business. So that my, my first job was at a desk where I received reports of the daily shipments received. And I would record them as, from the certain mill, certain number of bales, bale number, yardage, and owned by some New York firm. And uh, it was, it was a very interesting work, because in those days, and Sprague, after Sprague developed it was taken down, but we had a trestle. Of course everything mostly in those days was rail freight. [R: Umhm. (Unclear)] And we have a trestle with a platform along side one of these warehouses and it was big enough to hold seven freight cars. So a switch engine would come up in the morning and back in seven full cars. Now quickly we have to unload those cars, tag them, record them, store them, have empty cars to start loading in the afternoon with finished material going mostly down to New York City. So the cars would come in in the morning, unload it mid-day, load it up and would be yanked out by the switcher four or five o'clock in the afternoon. So my work mostly was connected with that end of the business.

R: But you did the paper work [few words unclear]?

W: I started doing to paper work and uh, then I mean [unclear] I was suppose to record these. And then at the direction of customer, they'd be ordered and processed and we'd, we'd make out the, the processing instructions. Typing them, distribute them, and uh, I did that for twenty-nine, about two or three years. [Tape is noisy] And then they decided that the uh, the control for the department would be better handled if it, the office was located right in the building. So they built an office. In fact if you walk up on Marshall Street today and see on the third floor the area where those windows are all very close, [R: umhm] those were the windows that were put in for my office which was, which was, that was the lighting for my office [R: uh huh] in 1932. So then we had control of the, of the warehouses, storage of what we called grey, grey goods, unfinished. Uh, unloading, shipping department, and shipping of finished materials. And uh, the open stock, which is bins, five stories of bins [R: umhm] where we stored the finished materials. Then we had to have, back in those days there were no, no computers, no machine accounting, we had great big books that we, gals posted by hand, [R: right] by pen and ink. And uh, that's the way the controls were kept. You know, simple addition and subtraction [few words unclear] so forth. So we had to keep track of that.

Then we had a refold department, whereas when uh, the material was sent to us flat, in other words full width. These were, were dress materials. In other words things that women used for dress because they weren't draperies, or, or upholstery products. And they were mostly finished anywheres from thirty-six to forty inches wide. So if you're going to lay them out and cut them for dress manufacture they were flat. Now if you're going to ship them to J.C. Penney, or Montgomery Ward for resale you, you, they called, what they called doubled and rolled. You took the cloth and folded it in half [R: in half] and then you rolled it on a, on a cardboard board. So that the (--)

R: With the, with the outside in, right, so you (--)

W: Yes. Yeah. So then you would take it and wrap it and uh, the net would be more easily handled and available for the retail business. So, but then it was necessary (--) As I say this material belonged to our customers and they would go from one way to another. They, they would take their flatfold good which they failed to sell to a manufacturer to be made into dresses and they'd convert it to doubled and rolled, which they'd want to sell to retail. [R: Right] So we had machinery and the ability to take, to run it off and fold it and rewind it. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] And it worked both ways. [R: Uh huh] And then there was a large problem, or part, it's part of the business of seconds a remnants. In other words short pieces, damage, slight damages, which could be sold in an off price and there was a demand for them. So we had a , a department of, set up a department to handle all of that. Ended up with a gentleman who was assigned to the New York office and he had charge of the sale of all of these remnants and seconds. [R: Umhm] Uh, this (--) And so that landing over in a mist of open stock in '32, in 1937 they developed, as I say this went through the depression years. Now in 1929 the depression didn't hit the textile business the way it affected lots of the banking business and other businesses. [R: umhm] It sort of, there was a carry over. It came maybe in thirty-five, or thirty-six [R: umhm] when, when we had tough going then. And it was tough going. Our wages were very minimal. My, my best recollection is that back in, when I first, let's say 1932 when went over there, the gals were paid twenty-three cents an hour. The men were paid twenty-eight cents an hour. And after they'd been there three or four years and what became proficient work was thirty-one cents an hour. It was before the days of FDR and NRA, and all that stuff. And uh, we worked unlimited hours. [R: Umhm] I remember distinctly we used to have, you'd report into work at seven o'clock in the morning. Right, and you'd knock off for lunch twelve to one. And your normal day was out at five. We used to have a gang come in at seven to twelve in the morning. I'd send them home at twelve o'clock, and they'd come back at six and work thirteen hours, from six at night till seven in the morning. And that stretch might go one for three or four weeks without a day off, seven days a week. [R: Umhm] And they would be paid for thir...thirteen hours. I mean working all night for, for regular pay. There was no time and a half, just ordinary pay. [R: Right] But you did pay them, [R: no shift premiums or anything like that] [unclear], you paid them for the hour, [R: Right, right] for their supper hour. And uh, well anyway they, the business changed to the point where rather than, than stay in the converting business they went into business of their own. They formed what they called the Arnold Sales Corporation, whereby they bought their own cloth and converted it. Had our own designers. And sold it either to manufacturers or to retailers. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] And, but as I say, not, not through, we were not a converting business. It was (--)

R: When was, when did that start?

W: In uh, mid thirties. [R: uh huh] So uh, in 1937 uh, I was transferred to the New York office in the Sales (--)

R: So you went down to New York City in '37.

W: I went to New York, yes.

R: Uh, just a, just a minute here. [Tape is turned off and then on again] Okay. Uh, so you left in '37 to go to New York? [W: Yes] When you were uh, when you were at Marshall Street, it sounds like uh, the way you're describing your job that you were in a management or at least a supervisory position?

W: I was in charge of all (--) I must have had three or four hundred people working for me. Between you know, the receiving, the storage, shipping, open stock, refold and as I say, working long hours was nothing. You, you could have two shifts. And your refold department could, could run two shifts.

R: And this is from the time you started there? You, you were, you were in this kind of position of authority from the time you started?

W: I, I took over in open stock in 1932, [R: uh huh] three years. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] I worked hard. [R: Yeah] All right. Can I brag?

R: Oh certainly, do what ever you want.

W: I was a young fellow.

R: You're not getting paid, but it is your tape.

W: [Chuckles] And uh, as I say, I didn't have a college education. I just went from high school. But I, I did have ambition I guess. [R: Umhm] Because I remember one [unclear] I pulled in going through these warehouses. Now the Arnold Print Works was, I remember our slogan was Master Craftsman since 1863. So their business was uh, sixty, seventy years old [R: Umhm] When I went over [unclear]. And I discovered in going through the, of course I was interested in, we had, (--) The warehouses were five stories high and some of them were sections, maybe three or four sections long. In other words a section being a complete uh, uh, uh, brick partition. And there were post every fifteen or twenty feet. Well like you saw [R: yeah, right] at the [unclear].

R: Well I've been through the building several times.

W: Yeah, have you been through the warehouses at the west end? [R: Yeah] Well those are the buildings I'm talking about. So, and a bale of those dry goods would be say uh, forty-five inches high [R: umhm] standing on a thirty-six by eighteen end. So you'd get a lot of them in one of the, in uh, between posts. So that we had a system of numbering the posts and lettering, lettering in one direction and numbering in the other. And, and call them using the code for the floor, a code for which section of the building you're in. And that sort of fascinated me. And I used to be check, checking on things to be sure that we knew what we were doing. Then in so doing I discovered that there was a lot of old old material there that was, had been there so long even the (--) Oh, one of the systems we had, we had, you, you took a manila tag with a brass hook on it that would hook into the burlap with a [few words unclear]. Now when you unloaded cars you had a, you started off in the morning with a whole bunch of these tags dated. So that when you

put the tag on, that identified it as being received properly. And the date [unclear] was the date that that was received if you wanted to go back to check any written records.

Well I discovered that there was bails there that were so damn old you couldn't read the date on them. And knowing that, that they were that old no, somebody never knew they were there. So that I uh, started from one end of the building to the other from top to bottom, area after area and recorded everything that I would assume was lost and forgotten. And I ended up with page after page. And I even ended up with material that wasn't even made into, into material, but was yarns that belonged, not at the Arnold Print Works, but up at one of the cotton mills. Hoosit Cotton Mill that, that made, that made material.

R: And they were just using it for storage?

W: Well there was an error. They were unloaded [R: uh huh] and, and nobody ever (--) See, they probably tried to trace them, but they could never find them. But they were shoved in one of our cars. We unloaded the bale not knowing what was in it, until I discovered through age and examined the markings. And so I made an inventory of the stock. [R: Uh huh] And uh, I know that uh, the treasurer made enough money on that inventory that I provided to pay my salary for the three years that I worked there. You know, because there was no obligation anyplace. That uh, there's no way at that time you could go back and trace them. [R: Right] So those were the (--)

R: So you had this stuff then. [W: Pardon?] You could sell it then?

W: Sure. [R: Right] So that, so I worked hard and I was lucky. And I was, was transferred to New York. And then my wife wouldn't let me leave town without getting married. [R: Uh huh] So, [R: so that's when] I left in April and we got married in June. [R: Uh huh] And then she came down with me. And we stayed till the end of the Arnold Print Works.

R: Uh huh. Uh, do you know either from having been told, or recollection what was at the Marshall Street complex before the Arnold Print Works? I'm told that it was a uh, um, I'm told that it was a shoe factory, but that there was a shoe factory before Arnold. You don't anything about it?

W: I don't think so, the Shoe Factory was across the street.

R: Uh huh. That was, those buildings were always Arnold Print Works. They were built by Arnold.

W: [Unclear] there in 1863, but I never heard (--)

R: '72 was my record of the first building. 1872. Uh, most of them were built between 1872 and 1899.

W: But, but there were an awful lot of shoe factories in North Adams you know. [R: Yeah] The, the Webber was across, right across the street from the Main Gate, and it ran up (--) Now see you wouldn't know Webber Avenue. [R: No] But there was a street that connected

Marshall to Holden called Webber Avenue. And on the river side of Webber Avenue were more brick shoe factories. And uh, and this building on Brown Street was a shoe factory. [R: Umhm] The Wallstreeter up on Union Street was a shoe factory. But I never heard of the Print Works property being. [R: Okay, uh] Have you, have you had one of those old books? They were published anywhere's from 1890 to 1910. Historical views (--)

R: Like a history?

W: Yeah, history of this area.

R: I'll have to check it out.

W: I have one at home. I was looking at it this morning. It's so old and brittle that I wouldn't loan it to anybody, because you know, the pages, part of the pages are broken [R: yeah] and it can't be handled. But if you'd like to see it.

R: You don't know what the title is?

W: Well no, but it was (--)

R: See, if I knew the title then I could go to(--)

W: Now I've had, I've had a long talk with Dale [R: yeah], because when she started I would have been, I offered to give her a lot of stuff but we never got together on some things. [R: Uh huh] And uh, she claimed that she had one. But you know I think the one I have is a little different than hers. Um, some of them, the North End was transferred. Our local newspaper goes way back. And they had something to do with publishing one.

R: Yeah, at least to the 60's, 1860's and 70's.

W: Now back about 1909 was an Old Home Week here I think. And there was a publication about that.

R: Yes, I read that.

W: But the one, the one that I had (--) [R: it didn't say anything about it] Is that a big, big book?

R: It's like a pamphlet.

W: Oh no no. This is a great big book. Uh, maybe you should (--) Do you have a car to drive around? [R: Yeah, yeah] Why don't you come up and see me sometime. [R: Sure] It's easy to find. You just take this street and you don't stop until you get to my house. And uh, uh, I don't know (--)

R: Maybe if there are particular pages that I think are important we could take, we could take

either here or to a library and have them zerox the pages I would need.

W: [Coughs] But if you zerox something you've got to put the thing over haven't you to put it on. But gee I'd even be afraid to (--) You'll understand better if you see it. I just, you're welcome (--)

R: Yeah. See but then when you do something like that thought, because zerox paper is acid free paper, then you've got it preserved. That's the, that's the other (--) You might want to do that to the whole book.

W: Well I told Dale at the time that you know, I told her that this (--) But uh, I don't think it's the book that she's thinking of. [R: Uh huh] I think this one is different. But they're are pictures.

R: Certainly would like that at the library too. Okay. Um, you said that you supervised up to roughly three hundred people and you were (--)

W: A lot more than that. [R: About that] Four or five. Four or five hundred.

R: Four or five hundred, uh huh. What was the total number of people employed there? Were you the top supervisor, or, or were there more (--)

W: Oh no, no. That was just a [R: that was like one department], this was like, this was a warehouse. [R: Yeah] The receiving and shipping department.

R: Uh huh. What was the total number of people employed? Just roughly.

W: You know I was afraid you were going to ask me that, because see at my age my, I, I'm probably thinking more of the figures I recollect from Sprague.

R: Well Sprague's is about forty-four hundred tops.

W: I mean I was just (--) Yeah but that's [R: but that was in all of their plants] that's worldwide.

R: No, that was all over North Adams. That was in Brown Street (--)

W: Yeah, we wouldn't have near that number. Now gee, (--)

R: It seems like a lot more people could work there frankly. I mean (--) [W: Pardon?] It seemed like a lot more people could work there. It's uh, you get lost in that place.

W: But they have, they had uh, three plants going in North Adams. Brown Street, Union Street and Marshall Street. Uh, I guess, but it's purely a guess in a neighborhood of two thousand.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Okay. You're allowed to guess. Um, so you went to, you went to New York. And what was your position in New York?

W: Well of course everything in New York was in the sales cater, line for sales, [R: uh huh] or a design. So I worked for the designer for awhile and picked up a knowledge of how designs were made. And reproduce from designs to carpet rollers to be printed on. And uh, this was 1937. In 1940 there was a, a personnel change. And the salesman, what they called the Middle West Salesman, left. And I was, I was made the Middle West Salesman. I took his place. Now at that time I was thirty years old. And so I travelled from New York to uh, as far west as Detroit, Fort Wayne Indiana, uh, West Virginia, Kentucky.

R: And who did you sell to?

W: Pardon?

R: Who did you sell to? Who did you sell to?

W: Who did I sell to? [R: Yeah] I sold to manufacturers, or shop (--)

R: I see, like dress manufacturers?

W: Dress manufacturers, or jobbers for the retail trade.

R: Uh huh. Um, and how long did you do that?

W: Uh, until the end.

R: When was that?

W: Uh, well you and I were arguing the other day. The reason I was a little bit foggy, I think I heard you said 1942 to you, and I think you said (--) I was talking about the vote to dissolve. And I think maybe you said '41. I go back this way. [R: No, '40. Somebody told me] In '43 I, '43 (--)

R: Somebody told me April of '42. It was a guy that was an engraver.

W: But, but see. Well let me go back. April of '43 I know I was sworn in the Navy. I got a commission and went in to the Navy in '43. I knew that a year prior to that I was with R. H. Macy. So now we're in April of '42. [R: Right] Now the day they voted to uh, to liquidate I didn't pick up my bag and walk out. [D: Uh huh] So there was a period there either, it had to be in '41. Now whether it was the Spring of '41. But uh, [noisy tape] there was someplace that wanted my souvenirs. [R: Uh huh] I've got a little clipping from the New York World Telegram you maybe (--) You never heard of them?

R: Love to have (--) Oh no, I know the New Telegram. [Unclear]

W: The [unclear] Telegram. But now, I think it was on the financial (--) In fact I always kidded with my friends that The Print Works was a funny organization. In those days they weren't too

caring for their help. They went their way. In fact remind me to tell you about the, the way their salary. But uh, my boss did call me in and tip me off [R: umhm] a couple of day ahead that something like this was liable to happen. But actually I got the [unclear] news in the afternoon paper. [R: Uh huh] In the financial section there was this little article that (--)

R: I would love to have a copy of that. I think that would be real important.

W: The direct, the directors(--). Well I, I can't (--)

R: You don't, you didn't keep it?

W: I don't know. How long is this project, are you going to be on this project?

R: Till September.

W: Oh, I can find that a lot of things before September.

R: Yeah. I'd like to find it by the early summer so I could use it, you know?

W: Um, well anyway. We're in (--). Is 1941 the [unclear] the year you're thinking of?

R: I was told, I was told April '42 that was, that you know. Because this, because this engraver told me he worked here at Marshall Street as an, as an apprentice engraver. His name is Roger Rivers. Uh, and he, he worked here as an apprentice engraver until March '42, when he joined the Navy. And then a month later the company dissolved.

W: Yeah, but see he's, he's saying the same thing I am. [R: Yeah] I, I worked at Arnold's until April of '42. [R: Uh huh] When I went to (--). But he's not telling you when they voted to close. That's the date he left.

R: Yeah. He said they left and then he heard in the paper that they shut down the month that he was off, he was gone.

W: Well see you don't fold up a big business like that over night you know. You've got warehouses full of material. You've got cellars full of copper rollers. During this, this was the war was on. [R: Right] This material was terrifically valuable. [R: Right, right] And uh, that's probably part of the reason for liquidation then. [R: Right] Whoever, uh, tax purposes, I guess corporation, if you didn't live till January 1st you didn't have to report your earnings for that year. [R: Right] And so between the earnings, that factor, to factor of the ownership of all this copper, which must, the price must have skyrocket, now I'm not doing this from memory. And then plus a junky came in and he bought the mill and immediately went through and striped all the, all the plumbing. [R: Right] All the pipes and everything else.

R: Um, did um, I'd like to (--). Your job when you were like a traveling, a traveling salesman uh, what, did you, did you enjoy that? What was that like?

W: That was the greatest. That was great. Uh, it's very funny what they (--) Uh, now I had contact with a lot of people when I was in, in North Adams. We used to have visitors uh, come up to the plant and show them through the plant. And, and we had visitors from abroad, because in order, technical data from the textile business came from Europe. And uh, so I had met them. And I was used to meeting people and talking to them. I, I worked for my father in the retail business. And uh, the salesman job sort of came natural to me. What they did, they took an old time southern salesman and had him take me out for a, a two week trial [R: uh huh] spin of the territory. And of course he was a, he was an old timer and knew the ropes. And told me just how to handle myself. [R: Uh huh] And it's hard to believe this today, but what I used to do, I used to go on a two week trip and uh, this was before credit cards and everything else. Uh, what you did, when you, when you travel and you'd go to the same hotels. The southern salesman always told me, go to a good hotel. When you go to Buffalo, go to [Stallard?]. When you go to Cincinnati, go to the Netherland Plaza. When you go to the Detroit to book Cadillac. [R: Yeah] And uh, your room, you know, about six dollars would buy, would get a nice room in a good, good hotel. When you go into uh, uh, and of course you travel by train. And you ate meals in the diner. And he says don't (--)

R: Not, not by car, you went by train?

W: Oh yeah. Well in, wait a minute now, we're 1940 and [R: no roads] there was uh, people didn't, it was entirely different. Trains were beautiful trains set-up. [R: Yeah] And uh (--)

R: How would you get to the train station to the hotel?

W: [Laughs] Taxis. Now then, then I had heavy sample bags. [R: Right] So then in those days hanging around the, the door to the hotel in the evening would be these fellows that were sort of porters. And uh, of course you had to learn, you'd recognize them and get to know them. But they, they'd solicit you. They see you coming in with all these bags and you'd have a porter from the hotel carry them in for you. These fellows would come up and say, "can I go around with you tomorrow boss?" Or you'd, you'd hire him to, and you'd say, "yeah, be here at eight o'clock tomorrow morning." And he'd stay the day with you. And he'd carry the bags to the cab, bring them in to your customer, and you finish, he'd call another cab and he'd, he'd take care of you all day long. And um, up in the north you'd pay him six or seven dollars a day, and down in the southern territory for five dollars a day. So that's (--) And uh, as I say (--)

R: But you had to travel with a bank roll then, because you didn't have credit cards?

W: No. [Chuckles] This is what we did. I'd leave New York with four one hundred dollar checks from the firm made out to me. And you, you, I'd start off with a hundred dollars. Now as I needed more money I cashed the other check. And I always came back, honest, really, I always came back with, with money left over. I didn't spend it all. [R: Uh huh] And as I say, this salesman told me, when you go in a dining cart, have a drink you know, a couple of scotches the way you always do. Don't try to uh, be thrifty and save money on your diner. Order the best diner on the menu. So that's what I did. And he said if you walk down the street and go by a [unclear] and you see a tie you like, do it the way you do it at home. Go in and buy it. So uh, I didn't have to be skimpy, and I was honest about not to be reckless. [R: Uh huh] I did come

home with money, and but I, it's hard to believe today [Bat you could do that with four hundred dollars. [R: Right] To, to, to train travel, parlor cars, diners, hotel.

R: You probably took a Pullman?

W: Oh yes. [R: Yeah] First class all of the time. And as I say, good hotels and (--) So that was very enjoyable work. And the reason for it was that you'd, you'd uh, you'd go two weeks at a time. Uh, of course we were still very newly married, and my wife was born and brought up here in North Adams. [R: Umhm] So when I went away for two weeks, she wasn't about the stay by herself in an apartment in New York. [R: She'd come back] She'd up here and with her friends. So she had a joyous time, reunion with her friends up here. And it would take you a week to sort of get things lined up for your trip. You'd be gone for two weeks. And uh, I sometimes figured some, connive some way to come back through this, this are through Albany or something. And uh, so that would take you another week to get your feet on the ground from your trip to get everything settled down. And uh, then another week of work and you're, you start all over again. [R: Uh huh] So time spread by and it was very happy, because I enjoyed meeting people. And I had some nice experiences in selling. Uh, and my wife enjoyed it. So it was very (--)

R: Uh huh. Uh, where did you live when you were in New York?

W: Um, most of the time we lived in uh, Hugh Gardens, [R: Uh huh, uh huh] Long Island.

R: Um, okay. Uh, and, and so you kept this job until um, until Arnold Print Works folds. Uh, and then what do you do in '43, or '42? You worked for Macy's the period (--)

W: '42. I, I uh, you know, it's a long story, but I, I had an acquaintance in Macy's. He knew me from way back. And he called me up to come up and see him. And uh, he offered me this job along (--) Well it was as I explained when on my first job in North Adams it was warehousing. So he had, and of course in Macy's uh, 34th Street store a large part of it is warehouse. So they had a big warehousing responsibility [R: yeah]. He offered me a job there. He told me to go home and talk to my wife and figure out what I would need for salary to maintain our manner of living, our apartment lease, our insurance and so forth, and to tell him. So I came back and told him it was a figure less than I was making, but enough to take care of me. And Macy was a fine firm to work for with their job reviews every six months. And uh, their policy was that you'd have a job review in six months. At the end of the job review the, the boss, or this was my experience thank goodness, would say without [unclear] you're going to have a raise, and so much, and it took effect the 1st of February. It went back in other words. So I think after two job reviews I was making more at Macy's than I was at [Harmon?]. So that worked out very well. Uh, [R: now how long?] you're not, you're not interested in my, with the reason I left, were you?

R: Now how long did you do that? No. Sure. I want to know what you, what your career was.

W: I, I uh, going back [R: how you end up back here?] to my Old World Telegram, there was an article in the paper that the Navy Supply Corps, we were in desperate need for (--) [R: that

was your paper huh, The World Telegram?] Well I used to read the New York Daily, Daily News in the morning. [R: Uh huh] And in the afternoon The World Telegram. [R: Right] And uh, I can't get away from it. I bought the Daily News ever since.

R: We used to have, we used to have thirteen papers I think at some point.

W: Pardon?

R: I think at that point they had something like thirteen papers in New York.

W: Sure, sure. But I used, I used to be farmer kid from North Adams to go out on the street at eight o'clock in the evening and buy the next day's paper. [R: right] And have all of the afternoon ball scores and everything in it. [R: unclear] That was great! And I never stopped to this day. This has been going on for fifty, sixty years. Uh, where was I? I was telling a story.

R: You were talking about what happened to you. How you got to Macy's and (--)

W: Oh. Um, in the afternoon paper I read this article that the Navy was in desperate need of uh, of uh, men for their supply corps that had had warehouse experience. Well I had been married uh, six, seven, seven years. [R: Uh huh] I was thirty-three years old, but I think still susceptible to the draft. So I told Doris, I think I'll go down and see them Saturday morning. So I cut the article out and I went down to 33 Pine Street. Do you know New York?

R: Oh yes. I lived in New York for a couple of years.

W: Down, down near Wall Street [R: sure] where the Navy Recruitment Office was during the war. And I walked in the door. And I, this officer I came to, I handed her this clipping. I said I just, I have a background that you might use and so I just want to check you out. So uh, I uh, to make a long story short I spent the whole damn day having interviews and taking tests and physicals and [tape fades out]

side one ends

side two begins

W: Get all sorts of letters of recommendation from friends, and back home [few words unclear-loud banging sound on tape]. And they uh, they have a, the FBI was too busy during the war to, to, to check out you know, applicants for Navy commissions. So they had a bank firm do it. Low and behold an old friend of mine from North Adams picked up my name and what I do. Would I drive up to the apartment house this evening. And he's sitting out on the front. [Unclear] in North Adams is worked in a bank. So anyway uh, it was just a matter of a few months and my commission came through. My wife called me in Macy's in the morning that I was to report the next day [R: So what was that? You're a Lieutenant J.G. or uh (--)] to be sworn in. How did you know?

R: Well I'm trying to figure where you would be. You wouldn't be a Petty Officer, because that's [unclear].

W: Right. That's very funny, because the man that asked me was a J.G. [R: Or maybe a Warren Officer] So he said to me, well what commission, what rank do you apply for? I couldn't very well say I want to be a J. G. like you. So I said Ensign. [R: Unclear] And he said, oh you're too, you're too old to be. [R: Yeah] So he put me down for J. G. So I went in a J.G., which was pretty damn nice.

R: That's what I thought, that the Ensigns are basically like guys who just got out of [unclear] school or something. [W: Yeah] Yeah. Um.

W: So I, they assigned me to a Naval Supply Depot [unclear] just across the river. Very interesting work. And I, and I had an absolutely marvelous experience in the Navy. I ended up, ended up out to Okinawa at the end of the war. And I, was stops at uh, Pearl Harbor and Guam on the way out. Had good duties all the way. Very, very nice experience. [Loud noise] So I've, I've led a charmed life.

R: Well then what happens in 1945 when you get de-commissioned?

W: I uh, I got home December of '45. In the meantime my brother stayed, my brother two years older than I am, he was married and had a large family, did not go into the service. He had started a retail stationary store in 1940. And I had ambitions of entering into a corporate arrangement with salesman for school supplies and a printer to form a corporation to do printing and, and wholesaling school supplies. And he was going to sell the store. So I'm sitting out to Okinowa. So he wrote to me that he wanted to know what ideas I had after the war. You know, knowing that Arnold Print Works, my career at Arnolds was all over. And I'd only been at Macy's for a year. And whether I wanted to be in New York or not, I didn't know. And I wrote back and told them that I appreciated the offer, but that I didn't, I couldn't make up my mind sitting out to Okinowa what I wanted to do. But that if he had a chance to make an advantageous sale to go right ahead, not to feel obligated to me. But if the business, if the plan was still available when I got home we'd talk. And it was.

So when I got home we uh, my wife and I went down to New York and looked around. And New York after the war was a mess. It was dirty and, and uh, I went up to Macy's. They treated me very nicely. I think possibly I might have had the idea that my salary [chuckles] should have been doubled because of three years I'd been to war. [R: Uh huh] I was given a nice increase. Wasn't doubled. They told me I could, I could work wherever I wanted to. In the store, in the warehouse, out to Long Island warehouse. They'd, they'd fix me up with a job anyplace. So that uh, New York didn't appeal to us. I mean you know, we're a couple of country kids. So we decided to stay home. Stay here. I bought, uh, became a partner in my brother's new business. And then uh, went on from there.

R: Huh. So you were, that Lamb Stationary, that's your [W: yes] [unclear]. That was it, you, you stayed with that till (--)

W: I sold it in '78. [R: Uh huh] Eleven years ago.

R: They're just going out of business now, right? [W: Right] That is [unclear] [W: Right] So you retired then in '78, is that it?

W: I retired. [R: Yeah] See I was sixty-eight years old in '78.

R: Right, right, right.

W: But as I say I led a charmed life. We had grown to hayday in the stationary business. We, we really had no competition. The discount stores hadn't been invented. And uh, the uh, chain stores weren't much competition. Just brag it out a big build up I, I served Sprague with all kinds of equipment.

R: Yeah, yeah. In the period that you were at uh, at Arnold Print Works, uh, did you develop friendships on the job, or were most of your friends from on the job, or from, from elsewhere?

W: Well you were (--) I mean, so such a large part of the work force of North Adams were employed at the Print Works. [R: unclear] I guess my share of my, my friendship were, were with people there. Oh that's not necessarily too bad. We had friends in other areas.

R: Um, how did you um, feel about the relationships with your superiors at uh, at Arnold Print Works?

W: Fine except for one period where I, I had a little personality clash with my, my direct boss. I, I knew that he was being sneaky with me when I'd leave the office and go to the warehouse. He was going through my desk and you know, [R: uh huh] the little girls would tattle to me. And I just felt that he was you know, I always like to do business direct. If you had a question look me in the eye and ask me and I'll give you an honest answer, but. So that that, it was a little bit unhappy. Well then of course I was transferred over. I was moved out to be in part of the warehouse [R: Umhm] and that alleviated that, settled that problem. But other than that everything was terrific.

R: What about, what about working conditions?

W: What I mentioned a few minutes ago about salary. [R: Yeah] I think when I went to work in twenty, my salary was eighteen dollars a week. And uh, when I got to be foreman I think I was up to thirty-five. And then they had a, a foreman's bonus arrangement where based upon your uh, your uh, production records for your department. [Lots of noise on tape] You were rated to earn bonus money. And what they would do, I guess, guess we got a bonus every month. And they'd give you half of the bonus and save half, and give you the second half as a Christmas payment. So that was a big help. I uh, I enjoyed that. It was very nice. But I mean as far as the help goes, those years '29 and '30, '31 they cold heartily come out and say, well everybody is taking a 10% reduction. And I, I, it had to happen at least twice during that period and maybe more, which was very very tough.

R: In fairly recent memory there was a, there was a pretty big strike against Sprague.

W: Against Sprague, but never against (--) I heard in your, in your article you said something about labor trouble.

R: Well I'm, I'm curious. That doesn't mean that I, that there wasn't any, I'm just, I'm asking you was there, you know, let's take a look.

W: Oh yeah. No, it made me think about it. [R: Yeah] I never remember a strike against the Arnold Print Works. Uh, and then I'm telling you about their minimal salaries, but men drove to work in cars. They had a Ford car, they brought up a family. How the hell they did it on 28 or 31 cents an hour I'll never know. [R: Yeah] But that's you know, as I talk to my wife about it, well she's sites how much I used to give her to buy groceries for the week. You know, she was allotted ten dollars. [R: Umhm] You know, when we were first married. [Comment unclear]

R: There apparently were several unions at the Arnold Print Works. Uh, in your position as a supervisor were, did you ever have any dealings with that, or ?

W: The unions were, were the uh, were the uh, (--)

R: United Textile Workers and I think that there was an engravers.

W: Were the experts, the engravers, [R: the engravers] and the sketch makers. [R: Uh huh] Now they were the highly paid unionized. [R: Right] Now the common help of which I was a member and the rest, the majority of the plant, they had no union, no strikes, but, and no pensions or anything.

R: So the, the engravers were kind of an elite?

W: Oh yes, yeah. [R: Yeah] It was father to son. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] You know, you had to (--) Oh, and the printers. [R: Uh huh] A printer, an engrave, and a sketch maker were the three.

R: Right. Umhm. Um, I, I mean sometimes I ask questions, that doesn't mean, that's not meant to imply that I think you know, if I ask were there labor disputes, that's not meant to imply that I think there were. I'm just looking to try and find out. [W: Yeah, sure] One of the uh, one of the main uh pro... The main sort of focus of the project is about work. And so naturally one of the things we focus on is labor and labor unions. And in fact in this period, I mean in 1935, 1936, there was, the whole nation was torn by labor disputes. So it's, it's actually surprising if there weren't any here. You know, to say, you know, it would be more typical if there were.

W: But we were, we were under this thumb of uh, you know [lots of noise on tape] [unclear] textile industry was a low paid are other than these uh, these technical jobs [R: Right] that we just spoke of. But the rest, the rest of them are just machine operated, or sort of manual labor that had no right and no basis for.

R: As, as a young man um, what did you do off the job? How did you pass your time? Or for that matter through, through your life what have your main hobbies been?

W: Gee, you're going to, you're going to embarrass me now. Because now we're talking prohibition. [Laughs]

R: Uh huh. I heard that there was a gambling place right over here. This was the old Greylock Club or something?

W: Oh sure. Well I was going to say it still, it still is. You mean over on the State Road? Well back (--)

R: The, the uh, the pub here I was told. They said they think that was a, that everyone in town was a (--)

W: You mean our, you mean this building right here?

R: Yeah, that that was busted for gambling.

W: In this close area now I remember. Are, are you, have you been around enough to know the area? Do you know the Springs Restaurant over in [unclear]?

R: [Unclear] I've heard of it.

W: On route (--) Now the Springs Restaurant came out as a [Grasso?] family.

R: That was a Speak Easy?

W: Now the Grasso family lived just down the street here. [R: Uh huh] And Old Kate was a great Italian cook. And her husband made home brew, or [unclear] [R: Yeah] to get kegs from Albany. So Kate used to put out these spaghetti dinners and rabbit cooked in wine and everything. In those days, well this is, [unclear] you're asking me what I did. I, one of the things I did was join the Local National Guard Unit in order to play basketball. [R: uh huh] So to take up time and have fun. And so that gang used to go down to Kate's because the officers in the Guard were acquainted with her. We'd go down there and the State Troopers would be in there. And, and she'd put on a dinner and drink beer, and have it all the time. Well then she had, the next generation were about my age. I went to school with Doris Grasso down in Mark Hopkin's School. And uh, she was, was, part of the Grasso family who had developed the, the motel and a classy restaurant over there. [R: Umhm] And she just died there a few years ago.

But uh, you know it's, it's funny we were talking about photography. In those days we hadn't, we hadn't arrived yet to the picture taking deal. But what's, what's fascinated me is over the years the coming and going of tennis. Now in, in about 1930 [R: it was very popular then] down across from where the McCann School is now there was, they ran this little oh, sandwich shop, or soda shop. Then they built a couple of tennis courts. Now I can remember every Saturday morning we, we, we uh, reserved tennis court. And we had three or four fellows that used to go down. My father, being an old traveling salesman uh, was a great card player. And uh, when he got settled in North Adams his cronies traveling, he used to bring down to the house to play cards. And of course my mother became a, a male card player. So that when we grew up the bridge, a contract bridge had just come into it's own. So we all learned to play bridge. So uh, at home I had one brother. So there was just four of us. So my mother and I would play my father and my brother. And we'd keep a year round score. But we'd play every night. Before we had a

date we'd play a little bit of bridge just (--) And uh, then we played with the girls. They've played ever since. They've enjoyed it. So between a little bit of tennis and a lot of (--) And then of course in those days uh, you had Sunday night. All you did in a town like this is go to the movies. [R: Umhm] So we had three movie theaters, [R: right] choice, but you couldn't go until you listened to Jack Benny at 7:00. [R: Yeah] Everybody stayed home to listen to Jack Benny.

R: Well he was into the early fifties. He was on the radio then. That's was Sunday night, wasn't it? [W: Yes] Yeah, and I remember it when I was a kid.

W: So, so, so we'd go through Jack Benny and we'd go to the movies, and then we'd stop [unclear] and have a couple of beers and a hot [unclear].

R: Was there, was there a Vaudeville functioning at all?

W: Oh yeah. The Empire [unclear] [R: The Paramount] had uh, yeah, [few words unclear].

R: Because I'm surprised that essentially that the Mohawk, the functions in many respects like the remnants of the Vaudeville Theater. They're always at least you know, two or three times a month they're having some kind of act there, [W: well] which is unusual. You don't find [unclear] in many places.

Um, besides the sort of you know, informal recreational things, and more formerly, much earlier in the interview I asked you about your church affiliation. Um, did you, or do you belong to any clubs, organizations, associations, civic groups, political groups, etc., that [unclear].

W: Well I've always been very active in, in uh, civic work. When I came back I,(--)

R: Like local government, or, or uh (--)

W: Well Red Cross I [unclear]. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] And that sort of, Chamber of Commerce. [R: Sure, oh] So I, shortly after I got back from the war and of course being in the retail business at home, everybody figured I was your own boss so that I could leave the store anytime I wanted to, which I did I guess. So if the undertaker needed some bearers, why he'd always call me up first thing, because I could always come up on a minutes notice. And so I, Chairman of the Northern Berkshire Red Cross Drive. [R: Uh uh] Got on the Board of the United Fund. I was president for a couple of years, and, and I worked with them for years. Things like that. And then of course my, I had an only, one and only son. And he [noisy tape] was active in Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Little League. So I went through the whole course with him.

R: When, how old is your son? Now when was he born?

W: Uh, '49.

R: Uh huh. I got to ask you a tough one now. This is a judgement question, which you don't have to answer, but I'm interested. I wish you would. Uh, as a small businessman how do you feel about, or how did you feel about Sprague pulling out of North Adams?

W: You mean the stunt they pulled two or three years ago?

R: Yeah. Yes. I imagine that uh, you, you remarked that they were, they were very helpful to your business. And uh, (--)

W: I did, I uh, I did a big job with Sprague. [R: Yeah] I was lucky. See, two or three times I've said I've led a charmed life. Think back to 1929. I went to work at the Arnold Print Works as a nineteen year old kid. [R: Umhm] I made my friends and contacts in the Arnold Print Works. In 1937 I left town to go to New York, and I came back after the war. Now Sprague in the meantime uh, Sprague had started and they were in that little, in that building up on Union Street. [R: Umhm] But Windsor Print Works was still running, Arnold Print Works, Deerfield Glasene, but in every one of those locations was an old friend of mine from Arnold Print Works. [R: Right] So that I had an automatic in. [R: Right] If I went to Deerfield Glasene and old buddy there. If I went to Windsor Print Works and old friend. I went to Sprague, two or three old friends. So uh, that was a tremendous break for me. [R: Umhm] [Voices in background] And of course you know, like everything else in this world, if you behave yourself then and be a good fellow, why you get, you're rewarded. [R: Right] But that was my experience. [R: Umhm]

So, but now to answer your question. I had a very close friend of mine [lots of noise on tape] that, you were talking about the uh, the uh, strikes. But for a long time Sprague [unclear] unions. And everything was fine. And then there was this agitation of IUE and AF of L, CIO coming in. And uh, that they were having quite a turmoil down there. And this was when Sprague was at it's peak. And this friend told me, he said, "Bill if they vote to join the IUE, it's going to be Sprague will be on the down side." And he was so right. From that time on my, when we started these plants up in Maine, New Hampshire, uh, Puerto Rico, down south, and to put the corporation [unclear] in size. [R: Yeah] Now um, um, I'm trying to place the year. Now what we're talking about is three years ago approximately was it? [R: Yeah, umhm] About 1985? See I'd been out of the business for seven years then. Well it's a funny thing, I was riding the crest. And in 1962 they built that, that uh, Research and Engineering Building [R: Umhm] across from [R: yeah] Marshall Street. And, and I sold them the whole kit and kaboodle, total charge of business. [R: Uh huh] And uh, in 1960, this was '62, in 1967 my son entered Williams. [R: Uh huh] And uh, I uh, was, was poor enough so that it wasn't easy, but rich enough so he had got no scholarship. [R: Right] So I'm proud to say that I put him through Williams full, all on my on. And uh, but it was, I think the big trouble with Sprague, it happened in '66 or '67 in [unclear]?

R: Well that's when the, that's when the IUE came in.

W: Yeah, that's, that's when they had the strike. Just, just when I needed them the most. And, and Sprague business went down from there. So that from that time Sprague, until I sold out, was about ten years down hill. So that by the time '85 came up and they made this change, I, [R: yeah] not much could surprise me. And of course, but uh, very proudly I remember old man, the old R.C. Sprague when I went in, he called I.C. down to become his assistant secretary of [unclear] something, Navy. [R: I don't remember that] Very, a very prominent cabinet post, but R.C. would have had to liquidate his holdings [R: Uh huh] of Sprague Electric Company [R:

right], because there was a conflict. And he wouldn't do it. [R: Uh huh] He stayed loyal to North Adams. And so there was a lot of you know, pride and admiration on the one hand, and problems on the other.

R: Um, now perhaps an even more controversial question. Uh, suggested by something you said to me earlier. Uh, what do you think of MoCA?

W: I think it's wonderful!

R: You think it's wonderful.

W: Absolutely wonderful. I just hope that I quickly join their (--) I wasn't young enough to go to the ball, [R: Uh huh] but uh I sent in my twenty bucks to be a supporter. And uh, it's very thrilling to me [R: umhm] to think this.

R: Uh, I have two, two more questions. Um, the formal name of our project is called Shifting Gears-The Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts 1920 to 1980. And there are, we have projects on, in six Heritage State Parks. There's one in Gardner, [R: Yeah, I know] and one in Holyoke, etc. And I, I basically would like you to take a look at that, at the question that our project implies. That is, what do you think has been the changing meaning of work in North Adams since the 1920's? How has the meaning of work changed in North Adams since the 1920's?

W: I don't, not sure I know what you mean by meaning of work.

R: I'm not sure I know either. [Laughs]

W: Work, work is work and uh, you uh (--) I have a biased opinion about Heritage Park, [R: Uh huh] because it was my son that conceived of this park [R: uh huh] when he was Mayor. And uh, so that I'm naturally very fond of it.

R: I'm not thinking of the park so much as the, the you know, if you think (--) You know, how, how has the, well I mean if you can think over the years and your, and in your own life what the meaning of work has been for you through your own life and how that has changed, what I'm really asking you at a larger, a larger question than that, because you know, how has it, how has it changed sort of socially for, for, for everyone. Is work, the meaning of work different than it was.

W: Well of course the, our whole life style has changed and that's the way I would have planned to work. We, when I think today what our kids do and how they do it, it's just unbelievable. [R: Yeah] My, my brother had five or six kids. We were more or less equal partners through most of our (--) We, we shared the store together. I ran the store, he (--) We finally bought out his other partners in the printing business. So I was a, a partner in the printing business and he ran the printing business. We were 50/50 on everything. Now he used to kid when a salesman would come in and say, they'd be talking about the family and what we did and everything. And uh, here was poor Dick with five or six kids buying the groceries and the clothing and

everything. And uh, I was just one kid. And he'd say, "gee, that brother of mine, he lives like a king, you know, he has everything." And so that there is, there are these differences. But today those, those uh, those kids of my brothers, all of them, or not all of them, but most of them got good educations. The only reason they all didn't, they didn't want to. [R: Uh huh] And they've all done well. But it's just unbelievable! One of the kids, beautiful big home down east. Bought a power boat, ocean going. And he just didn't like the sea. So he just swapped it in for a big lakeside boat. Bought a condominium up in New Hampshire lake to keep his boat. And uh, travels all over. Takes his parents to Europe. And it's uh, the level of living is so much higher today [R: Uh huh, uh huh] that it's hard for us to believe it. Now we uh, I uh, I was around when not only social security started, but income tax started. And I remember the days that people used to complain about paying an income tax. And we used to (--) I was just saying amongst my gang was, gee I don't know what the hell they're crapping about. If I made enough money to pay income tax I'd be happy. [R: Right, right] So now look what we've come to over the period. So many people depend upon social security for their, their living. [R: Right] They complain that they don't have enough. [R: Right] But that wasn't the idea.

R: Excuse me. [Has small conversation with someone in background]

W: So um, it, it's awful (--) There is that change in my mind. And it's all for the good. I mean I'm delighted that my kids can have what they have and do what they do. And uh, be independent as they are. [R: Umhm] But I couldn't keep up with them. And I have the income from the assets, the liquidation of my business, which, which I have a Scotch wife, so she didn't want to invest, you know, didn't want me to invest it. So it's mostly in CD's. [R: Uh huh] I bought a new car a couple of weeks ago and [few words unclear]. I did buy a little stock as I went along. And so I sold a few shares of stock to buy a new car. I figure I rather have a new car than stocks. So that I have been lucky, but uh, the level of living is so different [R: today] that it's hard for me to (--) And I know that the working conditions are, I mean it must have been pretty miserable to go into work seven in the morning till twelve, and then go back and work from six at night till seven in the morning. And do that for three or four weeks of running.

R: Is there anything else you'd like to add off hand?

W: I can't think of anything, [R: Uh huh] but if uh, if (--)

R: You want to show me these pictures, right?

W: Yeah.

R: We don't have to be on the tape to get them. Thank you very much.

W: All right. What I'll, as far...

SIDE TWO ENDS